

# N=N bond cleavage of azobenzene through Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub> photocatalytic reduction

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Received (in Cambridge, UK) 7th February 2000, Accepted 27th April 2000

**TiO<sub>2</sub> photocatalytic 2e<sup>-</sup>-reduction of azobenzene to hydrazobenzene is found to occur at λ<sub>ex</sub> > 300 nm while loading of nanometer-sized Pt particles on TiO<sub>2</sub> induces N=N bond cleavage via 4e<sup>-</sup>-reduction; only photoisomerization occurs in the absence of TiO<sub>2</sub>.**

From the viewpoint of “green chemistry”, it is important to develop new processes for synthesizing useful compounds or detoxifying harmful compounds utilizing solar energy. Heterogeneous photocatalytic oxidations derived from valence band holes (h<sup>+</sup><sub>vb</sub>) are attracting a great deal of attention for application to environmental problems.<sup>1,2</sup> Much less interest has been shown in reductive photochemistry despite the fact that conduction band electrons (e<sup>-</sup><sub>cb</sub>) have a potential to induce highly selective reduction because of their mild reducing power.<sup>3–6</sup> Most of the azo dyes used widely in textile industries are carcinogenic and resistant to bacterial degradation, thus requiring effective wastewater treatment. The groups of Kiwi<sup>7</sup> and Oliveira-Campos<sup>8</sup> have recently reported photocatalytic oxidation of azo dyes using TiO<sub>2</sub> and Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. On the other hand, to our knowledge, the present work is the first study on heterogeneous photocatalytic reduction of azo dyes. Particular emphasis is placed on the loading effect of Pt nanoparticles on a TiO<sub>2</sub>-photocatalyst.

Anatase TiO<sub>2</sub> particles (average diameter = 180 nm, BET surface area = 9.0 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>) were supplied from Tayca Co. (JA-1) and 0.1 wt% Pt was deposited on them by photodeposition (Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub>).<sup>9</sup> The particles (20 mg) were suspended in a 1.0 × 10<sup>-4</sup> M solution [50 mL, solvent H<sub>2</sub>O–EtOH (9/1 v/v)] of azobenzene (AB, > 95%, Tokyo Kasei Co.) in a double-jacketed cell. After the suspension had been purged with N<sub>2</sub> for 15 min, irradiation (λ<sub>ex</sub> > 300 nm) was carried out with a 400 W high-pressure mercury arc (H-400P, Toshiba); the light intensity integrated from 320 to 400 nm (I<sub>320–400</sub>) was measured as 3.4 mW cm<sup>-2</sup>. N<sub>2</sub> bubbling and magnetic stirring of the suspension were continued throughout the irradiation while the reaction temperature was maintained at 31 ± 1 °C by circulating thermostatted water around the cell through the outer jacket. Product analysis was performed by both UV–VIS spectroscopy and high performance liquid chromatography [HPLC measurement conditions: column = Fluofix INW425 4.6 × 250 mm (NEOS); mobile phase H<sub>2</sub>O–MeOH (1/1 v/v); flow rate = 3 mL min<sup>-1</sup>; λ = 230 nm].

High-resolution transmission electron micrograph (HRTEM) images of Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub> demonstrated that Pt particles of diameter 2–5 nm are dispersed on the surface of TiO<sub>2</sub>. The degree of adsorption of AB increased with loading of Pt (4.3 × 10<sup>-7</sup> mol g<sup>-1</sup> for TiO<sub>2</sub> and 2.6 × 10<sup>-6</sup> mol g<sup>-1</sup> for Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub> at an equilibrium concentration of 4.0 × 10<sup>-5</sup> M), whereas the degree of adsorption of EtOH was essentially invariant with Pt loading. This finding indicates that AB and EtOH preferentially adsorb on Pt and TiO<sub>2</sub> surfaces of Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub>, respectively. The interaction between AB and Pt would involve both σ-bonding [π orbital (AB) → d orbital (Pt)] and π-backbonding [d orbitals (Pt) → π\* orbital (AB)]. Aliphatic alcohols are known to adsorb strongly on the surface of TiO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>10</sup>

The electronic absorption spectrum of AB showed two absorption bands at 423 and 321 nm assignable to the n→π\* and π→π\* transitions, respectively, for the *trans* isomer. The absorptivity of the π→π\* band for the *trans* isomer is 3.3 times that for the *cis* isomer.<sup>11</sup> The visible absorption at λ > 400 nm vanishes when the N=N bond of AB is broken. Accordingly, the n→π\* band is a good indication of the presence of the N=N bond. Without either TiO<sub>2</sub> (or Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub>) or irradiation, the intensity of the n→π\* band was almost invariant, while that of the π→π\* band significantly decreased. This fact suggests that only *trans*–*cis* isomerization occurs under these conditions.<sup>12</sup> Also, Pt loading on TiO<sub>2</sub> increased the rate of isomerization in the dark. This is probably due to the decrease in the energy barrier for molecular rotation around the N=N bond with adsorption of AB on Pt surfaces. No products other than AB were detected from the irradiated solution by HPLC, which supports the above conclusion.

Fig. 1 shows the variation of the concentrations of AB and products in the presence of TiO<sub>2</sub> as a function of irradiation time (*t*). AB is slowly reduced to hydrazobenzene (HAB) with a selectivity of 97% at 0 < *t* < 3 h. Since the turnover frequency is calculated to be *ca.* 3 at *t* = 3 h, this reaction can be regarded as photocatalytic. In the absorption spectra, the n→π\* band gradually weakened concurrently with a rapid decrease in the π→π\* band intensity. Providing direct evidence for cleavage of the N=N bond.

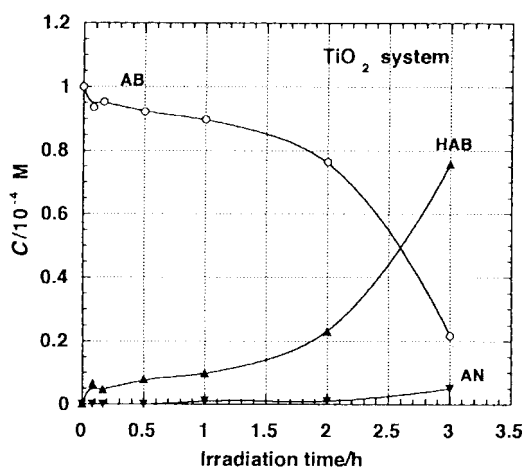
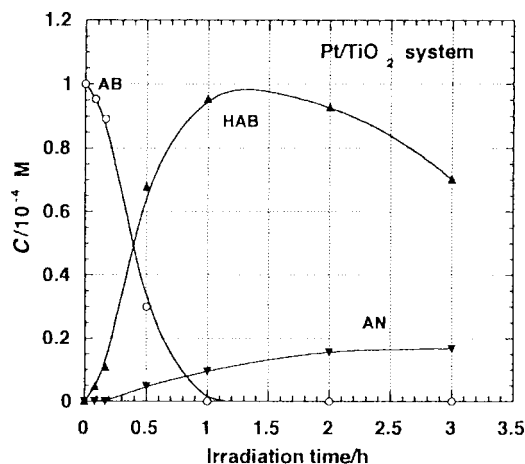


Fig. 1 TiO<sub>2</sub> photocatalytic reduction of AB at 31 ± 1 °C; initial pH = 6.4; TiO<sub>2</sub> 20 mg/50 mL.

Fig. 2 shows time profiles of the concentrations of AB and products with irradiation in the presence of Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub>. The rate of reduction of AB to HAB markedly increases with loading of Pt [conversion *ca.* 100%, selectivity (HAB) = 91% at *t* = 1 h]. Noticeably, further reduction of HAB to aniline (AN) occurs [selectivity(AN) = 19.2% at *t* = 3 h]. In the absorption spectra, the n→π\* band of AB completely disappeared at *t* = 1 h and new absorption bands appeared at 280 and 230 nm at 3 h that are in accordance with the positions for the n→π\* and π→π\*



**Fig. 2** Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub> photocatalytic reduction of AB at 31 ± 1 °C: initial pH = 6.5; Pt(0.10 wt%)/TiO<sub>2</sub>.

bands, respectively, of AN. These facts are consistent with the results of Fig. 2. The pH of the Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub> system decreased from 6.5 ( $t = 0$ ) to 5.6 ( $t = 1$  h), while the corresponding change was very small for the unmodified TiO<sub>2</sub> system ( $\Delta$  pH = 0.2). Product analysis by gas chromatography confirmed generation of MeCHO and CO<sub>2</sub> in each system. Evidently, EtOH acts as a reductant in the present photocatalytic reaction.<sup>13</sup> It has been established that EtOH exerts a current doubling effect in TiO<sub>2</sub> photocatalysis,<sup>14</sup> which would also be responsible for the reduction to proceed.

The results above clarified the two effects of Pt loading; one is to increase the rate of 2e<sup>-</sup>-reduction (AB→HAB) and the other is to enable 4e<sup>-</sup>-reduction (AB→AN). Pt loading enhances both the adsorption of AB (adsorption effect)<sup>4</sup> and the charge separation of e<sup>-</sup><sub>cb</sub>·h<sup>+</sup><sub>vb</sub> pairs (charge separation effect).<sup>15</sup> In addition, selective adsorption of the reactant (AB) on reduction sites (Pt) and the reductant (EtOH) on oxidation sites (TiO<sub>2</sub>) is observed (reasonable delivery effect).<sup>16</sup> The remarkable increase in the reduction rate can be explained in terms of these effects. Also, inspection of Fig. 1 and comparison with Fig. 2 suggests that Pt loading leads to the absence of an

induction period. Further the surface multi-electron transfer is thought to be assisted by an electron-pool effect of Pt with a large work function.

In conclusion, the 2e<sup>-</sup>-reduction of AB to HAB proceeds selectively by using TiO<sub>2</sub> as a photocatalyst, whereas only photoisomerization occurs in the absence of TiO<sub>2</sub>. Loading of Pt on TiO<sub>2</sub> not only accelerates the reduction but also enables the 4e<sup>-</sup>-reduction of AB to AN. Our work thus represents a novel method for treating wastewater containing azo dyes via reductive cleavage of the N=N bonds.

We express sincere gratitude to Professor Masakuni Yoshihara (Kinki University) for permission to use HPLC and to Dr Tomoki Akita (Osaka National Research Institute) for the HRTEM measurements.

## Notes and references

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